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ABSTRACT

In order to test the hypothesis that size of place of residence and urban proximity preferences constitute factors in population dispersal migration behavior, a random sample of 777 Pennsylvania households plus a sample screened for moving probability (N=319) were surveyed via personal interviews in 1974. A follow-up survey on actual migration patterns was conducted by phone one year later. Data were analyzed in terms of: (1) preferred size of place of residence by size of place of origin (central city or suburb over 500,000; medium-sized city of 50,000-500,000; smaller city/village under 50,000; and countryside); (2) size of place of destination by preferred size of place of residence; (3) percent of movers attaining preferred size of place of destination and zero order and partial correlation coefficients between preferred and size of place of destination; (4) percent of movers attaining preferred destination with respect to a large city and zero order and partial correlation coefficients between preferred and actual destination with respect to a large city. Data did not support the population spread approach (growth spread in rural areas), as most respondents who preferred a smaller size of place also wanted to be within commuting distance of an urban center, nor did the data indicate correlation between residential preferences and actual migration behavior among those preferring smaller rural places. (JC)

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RESIDENTIAL PREFERENCES AND POPULATION DISPERSAL MIGRATION BEHAVIOR*

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ABSTRACT

Public opinion polls have reported for some time now Americans' strong preference to live in smaller cities, towns and rural areas rather than in large cities. However, as Fuguitt and Zuiches (1975) have reported, the majority of people also want these places to be within commuting distance of a large metropolitan city. This research tests the hypothesis that size of place and urban proximity preferences are factors in population dispersal migration behavior. A one-year panel survey of Pennsylvania households indicates that only about one household in ten that moved actually attained its preference for a smaller size of place or more distant location with respect to a large city. Smaller size of place and proximity preferences were not correlated with where people actually moved when the size and proximity of the previous residence was taken into consideration.

RESIDENTIAL PREFERENCES AND POPULATION DISPERSAL MIGRATION BEHAVIOR

Two of the more remarkable demographic events in recent years have been the cessation of population growth in many of our Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas and the renewal of population growth in many nonmetropolitan areas, including areas that are at some distance from metropolitan centers. Since 1970 Beale (1975) reports that United States nonmetropolitan counties which recorded a net out-migration rate of 300,000 per year during the 1960's now have an in-migration rate of about 350,000 migrants per year. It is the first time in 70 years that the nation's nonmetropolitan population growth has exceeded metropolitan growth, and migration from the city has exceeded migration to the city. These events come against a background of increasing attention to the problem of population distribution and the need for explicit rather than implicit national policy consideration of population distribution (see, for example, Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1968; National Goals Research Staff, 1970; Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, 1972; Morrison, 1972; Hansen, 1970; Alonso, 1970; Fuguitt; 1971; President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, 1967; Sundquist, 1970, 1975; Rodwin, 1970; Dillman, 1973; and De Jong, 1975). One policy-related aspect of population distribution between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas is the residential preferences which people express for various locations.

That people express a greater preference for smaller rather than larger size places has now been reported by public opinion polls for several years (Gallup, 1970, Fuguitt and Zuiches, 1975). This evidence has led to the suggestion that actualizing preferences for nonmetropolitan locations would be in the public as well as private interest and thus constitute a rationale for a population dispersal policy. However, little information is available as to the reasons for the renewed growth in nonmetropolitan areas and what role, if any, residential preferences play in the population dispersal trend in the United States. This paper offers direct evidence on the role of preferences in a population dispersal migration pattern. Based on a longitudinal study of household residential preferences and subsequent migration patterns over the one-year period from Spring, 1974 to Spring, 1975, the specific focus is on the extent to which people who move attain a preference for a smaller size of place or a location more distant from a larger city.

Residential Preferences and Metropolitan to Nonmetropolitan Migration

In its current stage of development, migration theory offers little guidance in placing the residential preferences hypothesis in a broader context of explanations for metropolitan to nonmetropolitan migration. Theoretical development of this hypothesis would necessitate integrating residential preference attitudes into a broader model of alternative "push-pull" factors (Lee, 1966) which have been shown to influence migration behavior. More specifically, residential preference is a dimension of an individual decision-making model of migration designed to be applicable to specific migration streams (in this case streams affecting non-urbanized and nonmetropolitan area population change). While there are several

micro-demographic migration models and research efforts (see, for example, Goldscheider, 1971; Speare, 1971; Speare, 1974; Lansing and Mueller, 1967; Sabagh et al., 1969; Rossi, 1955; Butler et al., 1969; Wolpert, 1965; Simon, 1957; van Arsdol et al., 1968; and reviews by Simmons, 1968; and Morrison, 1972), few if any of these studies directly evaluate and theoretically integrate the role of preferences in a population dispersal migration pattern.

Focusing specifically on previous residential preference research, two general approaches have emerged. The first approach examines residential preference as a factor of housing and/or intra-urban neighborhood choice. The thrust of much of this research has been an empirical analysis of perceived preferences with respect to alternative living environments (see, for example, Butler et al., 1969; Lansing et al., 1970; Lamanna, 1964; Munson, 1956; Richards, 1963; Johnson, 1971; Michelson, 1966; Michelson, 1967; Wilson, 1962; Peterson, 1967; Foote et al., 1960; Hornville, 1971; and Kain and Quigley, 1970). The focus on the amenities and qualities of life people desire, while of particular interest and value to planners, is not aimed directly at the issues of size of place preference and population redistribution. An emphasis on these latter issues constitutes a second approach to residential preferences (see, for example, Mazie and Rawlings, 1972; Fuguitt and Zuiches, 1975; Zuiches and Fuguitt, 1972; Dillman and Dobash, 1972; and Lee et al., 1971).

Both size of place preference and attributes, conditions or characteristics sought have been studied by Fuguitt and Zuiches (1975) with a national sample and by De Jong (1974) in a report on Pennsylvania population redistribution. In respect to size of place preferences the results of these two studies are much the

same in that they markedly qualify the public opinion poll conclusions which have shown 1) that most respondents would like to live in small towns and rural areas, and 2) that the percentage of people expressing this preference exceeded the percentage currently living there. It appears, however, that while many people do not want to live in a large city, neither do they want to live very far away from one. When respondents expressed a preference for a location by the degree of proximity to a large city of over 50,000 people, there is a marked preference for smaller towns and rural areas within commuting distance (about 30 miles) of a large city. Population growth in these exurban residential area commuting zones has, in fact, been most marked in the past decade. Thus although people seem to want a small town or rural environment, they also want it to be near a metropolitan center.

To date the data on the relationship between residential preferences and population distribution has been limited to statements of desires and expectations. While this information provides a tentative basis for inferences about metropolitan to nonmetropolitan migration, it suffers from the substitution of a hypothetical migration stream for actual migration behavior. As a result the validity of the hypothesis that size of place or urban proximity preferences is a factor in population dispersal is still open to question. It is to a more direct assessment of this hypothesis that this research is addressed.

Data and Methodology

The data are from a panel design survey of residential preferences and migration for Pennsylvania households. The first interview concerned residential preference in terms of both size of place and proximity to a large city as well as an extensive

list of residential preference attributes. Conducted in the Spring of 1974, the survey was a multi-staged area probability sample down to the block level where quota sampling was used, with quotas based on sex and employment status. The sample was designed to identify a random sample of the noninstitutional population of the state, 18 years of age and over. The primary sampling strata were large metropolitan areas (Philadelphia and Pittsburgh), medium-sized metropolitan areas (other metropolitan cities in the state), and nonmetropolitan areas. Because of the quota feature of the sample design, tests of significance are not appropriate. The sample procedures resulted in a random sample of 777 households plus a special screened sample of 319 households where the respondent indicated a fairly high probability of the household moving within the coming year. A fairly high probability of moving was defined as a "definitely will move", "probably will move", or "a fair chance of moving" response to the question: "We are interested in how likely it is that you and the members of your household will try to move from your present place in the next 12 months." The completion rate for the random sampling was 76 percent, within acceptable range for this type of survey. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by trained personnel of the Pennsylvania Field Research Laboratory. A follow-up survey on actual migration patterns was conducted by phone one year later in the Spring of 1975.

A special problem in this type of migration research is that households are the sampling and migration unit while preference attitudes are obtained from the household head or the spouse of the head. To minimize this incongruity we specifically asked the respondent to answer each preference question as a respondent-informant

for the entire household. That household members could hold differing preferences was thus a possible response, but one reported by less than four percent of the respondents. We also probed concerning who made the final decision to move. Fifty-five percent of the households indicated a joint decision between the household head and the spouse, 35 percent reported the final decision was made by the household head, 5 percent by the spouse of the head and 5 percent by other persons. The follow-up survey was conducted with the same random respondent as the original interview in 95 percent of the households recontacted.

From the original sample of 1096 households, 944 (90.7 percent) completed interviews were obtained. Of the incomplete cases 2.0 percent were contacted but refused to be interviewed while 7.3 percent could not be recontacted. An analysis of the households that could not be recontacted indicated that ~~it was~~ they were largely central city lower socioeconomic status households, 58 percent of whom had black household heads and an average age of 51 years. In a four-way comparison with nonmovers, local movers, and out-of-town movers, the not recontacted households were most similar to nonmovers and least similar to out-of-town movers. No phone, an unlisted phone, and the unwillingness of family and friends to facilitate recontact were major factors in the reinterview completeness rate. From the available information it is possible that up to 20 of the not recontacted households may have changed residences.

In order to have enough cases to analyze different migration patterns and to accurately represent the noninstitutional population of the state, the random and screened samples were combined by means of a weighting scheme (De Jong and Sell, 1975). Based on the weighted sample 12.1 percent of the state's households containing 12.0 percent of the state's population changed residences within the one year

period of the study. This figure is almost identical to the 12.1 percent mobility figure reported by the U.S. Bureau of the Census as a one-year rate for the metropolitan Northeast during their March 1970-March 1971 period - the latest one year rate available from the Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972).

We classified the community where the household lived at the time of the first survey, the community where a migrant household lived at the time of the second survey, and the respondent's preferred size of place of residence at the time of the first survey according to the categories in the following set of questions.

> "In terms of size, if you could live in any size community you wanted to, would you prefer to live in:
>
> 1. A large city of over 500,000 people (about the size of Philadelphia or Pittsburgh).
> 2. A suburb of a large city (about the size of Philadelphia or Pittsburgh).
> 3. A medium-sized city of 50,000 to 500,000 people (about the size of Harrisburg, Bethlehem or Johnstown).
> 4. A smaller city of 10,000 to 50,000 people.
> 5. A city or village under 10,000 people.
> 6. The countryside outside a city or village.

If the respondents indicated a preference for either a smaller city, a city or village under 10,000 or the countryside, the following question was also asked:

> "Would you prefer to live say within 15 miles of a large or medium-sized city of over 50,000 people, live about 15 to 30 miles from the city, or be farther away from such a city?"

This set of categories is essentially similar to that used by Fuguitt and Zuiches (1975) in their nationwide survey of size of place preferences. While a more precise

interpretation of size of place preferences might be collected through a different interview format (Dillman, 1973), the congruity between the time 1, time 2 and preferences categories facilitates the interpretability of the results. Size of place of residence and distance from a city data were coded from household addresses. Distance from a city was computed using zip code area coordinates of the respondent's post office and the geographic center of the nearest city of 50,000 or more inhabitants. The subsequent analysis is of the 225 households that moved during the study period. A comparison of mover and nonmover households revealed no significant difference on size of place residential preferences. Of the households that moved 40 percent reported they lived in the same town or city and 60 percent reported living in a different town or city than a year earlier.

Size of Place Preference and Migration Behavior

Consistent with most previous research on residential size of place preferences, 76 percent of the movers in our sample expressed a decided preference for smaller cities, villages and the countryside when they were interviewed in 1974 (Table 1). With proximity to a city ignored, this percentage compares favorably with Fuguitt and Zuiches' 74 percent from a nationwide sample. The percentages on the principal diagonal represent those respondents whose area of origin and preferred size of place of residence coincide. In only one of these categories (the countryside) does size of place of origin and preferred residence coincide for more than one-half of the respondents. The relatively small percentage (13) of the total sample expressing a preference for larger size places (above and to the right of the diagonal in Table 1) is the striking pattern noted by other researchers (Fuguitt and Zuiches, 1975).

Equally striking, however, is the incongruity between the preferences and the actual size of place of destination of these movers one year later. As the data in Table 2 indicate, a total of 58 percent actually located in the central city or suburb of a large or a medium-sized city. This is more than 2½ times the proportion who stated a preference for a larger or medium-sized city location. By comparison 42 percent actually located in a smaller city, village, or the countryside while 73 percent stated a preference for these size of place locations. The percentages on the principal diagonal indicate where the preferred size of place coincides with the size of place of destination. For the entire sample this group was 34 percent of all movers, but the figure ranged from 83 percent for those who preferred the central city or suburb of a large metropolitan area to 19 percent for those who preferred a countryside location. Clearly many respondents who expressed a preference for a smaller city, village or countryside location actually moved to a larger sized place (above and to the right of the diagonal in Table 2) while relatively few actually moved to the smaller-sized preferred locations (below and to the left of the diagonal in Table 2).

The weak relationship between preferred and actual location is more evident in Table 3 which summarizes the percent of movers attaining their preferred destination for the same, any larger, or any smaller size of place and zero order and partial correlations where previous size of place of origin is statistically controlled. The data indicate that only 11 percent of all movers preferring a smaller size of place were able to attain that preference, 27 percent of movers preferring a larger size of place, but 70 percent of those preferring the same size of place as their area of origin. The partial correlation coefficient between preferences and actual migration

was .136 for all respondents but was similarly differentiated for these grouped categories. For movers preferring the same size of place as their area of origin it was .754, compared to .506 for movers preferring a larger size of place and a -.138 for movers preferring a smaller size of place. Thus while there was overall a strong desire for a small town and rural living, the ability to obtain these desired locations through actual migration behavior was limited to about one household in ten as measured by our size of place analytical scheme, and the greater probability was actually for a move to a larger size of place.

Proximity to Large City Preference and Migration Behavior

To this point the analysis has concentrated on size of place preferences and ignored the proximity of a preferred place to a large city. As was noted earlier, however, proximity to a large city is a critical specification in the residential preference-population distribution argument (Fuguitt and Zuiches, 1975 and De Jong, 1974). Thus the finding that a relatively small proportion of households that moved to smaller size places between 1974 and 1975 were able to attain a preferred size of place may be in part a function of proximity to a large city.

To test this hypothesis we classified smaller city, village and countryside locations at the time of the first interview, the second interview, and the respondent's residential preference responses as being within 15 miles of a large city, between 15 and 30 miles of a large city, or more than 30 miles from a large city. In all 32 percent of the respondents preferred a smaller size of place within 15 miles of a large city, 29 percent between 15 and 30 miles of a large city, and 17 percent more than 30 miles from a large city. These percentages are generally consistent with Fuguitt and

Zuiches' national sample of 19 percent preference for a location more than 30 miles from a large city and 55 percent within 30 miles of a large city. The data reinforce the conclusion that if people could live in the location of their preference, the clear desire is to have the best of both the urban and rural environments by living out but not way out of a large city.

Turning to residential preferences and actual migration, as noted before more than 2½ times the 22 percent who stated a preference for a large or medium-sized city location actually move there. In terms of proximity to a large city, 15 percent of our sample of movers relocated in a smaller city, village or the countryside within 15 miles of a large city and 24 percent within 15 and 30 miles of a large city. The preference figures for these two locations was 32 and 29 percent, respectively. Five percent relocated in a small city, village or the countryside more than 30 miles from a large city although 17 percent expressed a preference for these areas.

While these figures fit the pattern of observed population growth in smaller cities, villages, and the countryside within commuting distance of large cities, clearly many respondents who preferred to locate <u>out</u> of a larger city actually moved to a location <u>within</u> a large or medium-sized city. As in the case of size of place preferences, the relatively weak relationship between preferred and actual location is evident in Table 4 which presents a three-way analysis of location with respect to a large city for the place of origin, preferred place of residence, and place of destination. Only 7 percent of movers preferring a smaller size of place or a location further from a large city than their area of origin were able to attain their preference. This compared to 19 percent attainment for those preferring a larger size of place or location nearer to a larger city than their area of origin. On the other hand 72 percent

of primarily short-distance movers, who preferred the same size of place or distance from a large city as their area of origin, attained their preferred location. Similarly, the partial correlation coefficient between preferred proximity to a city and actual migration was .131 for all respondents but was differentiated for other categories. For movers preferring the same size of place or distance from a large city as their area of origin the partial correlation was .852, compared to .448 for movers preferring a larger size of place or location closer to a large city, and -.109 for movers preferring a smaller size of place or a location further from a large city.

In summary the pattern again shows a high attainment of a preferred residence with respect to proximity to a large city where there was congruence between size of place of origin and preferred location, and a moderately low attainment of a large size of preferred residence. But there was little relationship between actual migration behavior and preferences for a more distant location from a large city. The data thus tend to reject the hypothesis that proximity to a large city is a critical specification in the relationship between size of place residential preferences and population dispersal migration behavior.

Discussion

Based on the evidence we conclude that the extent to which movers can attain a stated size of place preference or a preferred proximity to a large city is greatly determined by whether or not their preferred location is the same or different from their previous residence. If the two are congruent, as is the case for many short-distance movers, then the relationship between residential preferences and actual migration is quite high (about 70 percent attainment of a preference category). But

if the household prefers a different size of place or proximity location with respect to a large city, then the relationship between residential preference and actual migration is low (about 14 percent attainment), particularly for those preferring either a smaller size of place or a location further from a large city (about 10 percent attainment and a small negative partial correlation coefficient). As the latter situation applies to respondents moving ina metropolitan toward nonmetropolitan stream, residential preferences expressed in terms of small city, village or the countryside, or proximity to a city locations seem to have little relationship to actual migration behavior categorized by the same size of place or proximity scheme.

These conclusions do not minimize the favorable orientation to rural and small town life expressed by the respondents in this and previous surveys. The findings do suggest that the links between size of place preference statements and area of destination of movers one year later is not straight forward. Several alternative explanations can be suggested for the weak relationship between size of place preference statements and mobility behavior for metropolitan to nonmetropolitan direction movers. It could be that the frequently reported favorable view of rural and small town life is a very general orientation which is relatively unimportant in actual location decision-making. Size of place and proximity preferences assume all other things are equal. However, many things, such as the quality of schools and other services, are not equal. They are often better in suburbs than in nonmetropolitan areas. Another possible explanation is that financial constraints, location of work, and spatially related factors prevent people from attaining their size of place preference. A third possible explanation is that size of place categories and proximity with respect to a large city are relatively unimportant concepts to respondents when it comes to

actual location decisions. These categories may be surrogates for specific home, community, or area attributes or characteristics which members of the household desire. If this is the case, preference for small town or countryside locations may be attributed to specific attributes or desired characteristics.

From a population dispersal policy perspective, these data do not support the "population spread" approach which is oriented at growth spread throughout sparsely populated rural areas. Most respondents who prefer a smaller size of place also want to be within commuting distance of a metropolitan center. Furthermore our data indicate no correlation between residential preferences and actual migration behavior for those who prefer a smaller size of place or a rural environment. Thus neither the attitude nor the migration behavior data point to preferences for smaller cities, villages or the countryside as a strong basis for a population redistribution policy. Not directly assessed either in terms of preferences or actual migration behavior was the potential for policy stimulated growth in smaller and middle-sized "growth center" cities. Such an approach represents an alternative albeit related perspective to population dispersal policy (Hansen, 1971, 1973a, 1973b; and Fuguitt, 1971).

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Table 1. Preferred Size of Place of Residence by Size of Place of Origin, 1974-75

Preferred Size of Residence	Size of Place of Origin: Central City or Suburb of City Over 500,000	Medium-Sized City of 50,000-500,000	Smaller City or Village Under 50,000	Countryside	Total
Central City or Suburb of City Over 500,000	43%	6%	4%	-	18%
Medium-Sized City of 50,000-500,000	1	18	4	7	6
Smaller City or Village Under 50,000	34	34	50	36	39
Countryside	22	42	42	57	37
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of Cases	(82)	(45)	(56)	(42)	(225)

Table 2. Size of Place of Destination by Preferred Size of Place of Residence, 1974-75

Size of Place of Destination	Preferred Size of Place: Central City or Suburb of City Over 500,000	Medium-Sized City of 50,000-500,000	Smaller City or Village Under 50,000	Countryside	Total
Central City or Suburb of City Over 500,000	83%	21%	33%	25%	37%
Medium-Sized City of 50,000-500,000	7	50	21	22	21
Smaller City or Village under 50,000	7	21	37	34	31
Countryside	3	8	9	19	11
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of Cases	(40)	(14)	(86)	(85)	(225)

Table 3. Percent of Movers Attaining Preferred Size of Place of Destination, and Zero Order and Partial Correlation Coefficients Between Preferred and Size of Place of Destination, 1974-75

Classification of Move	Percent Attaining Preferred Location	Zero Order Correlations	Partial Correlations*	Base Number
All Movers	34%	.375	.136	225
Movers preferring the same size of place as area of origin	70%	.754	.754	79
Movers preferring a different size of place than area of origin	14%	.131	.130	146
Movers preferring a larger size of place than area of origin	27%	.617	.506	30
Movers preferring a smaller size of place than area of origin	11%	.258	-.138	116

Based on the following size of place categories: a large city of over 500,000 people; a suburb of a large city of over 500,000 people; a medium-sized city of 50,000 to 500,000 people; a smaller city of 10,000 to 50,000 people; a city of village under 10,000 people; the countryside outside a city or village

*Controlled on size of place of origin.

Table 4. Percent of Movers Attaining Preferred Destination and Location with Respect to a Large City, and Zero Order and Partial Correlation Coefficients Between Preferred and Actual Destination with Respect to a Large City, 1974-75

Classification of Move	Percent Attaining Preferred Location	Zero Order Correlations	Partial Correlations*	Base Number
All Movers	28%	.365	.131	220
Movers preferring the same size of place or distance from a larger city as area of origin	72%	.852	.852	65
Movers preferring a different size of place or distance from a larger city as area of origin	13%	.192	.100	155
Movers preferring a larger size of place or location nearer to a larger city than area of origin	19%	.661	.448	37
Movers preferring a smaller size of place or location further from a larger city than area of origin	7%	.350	-.109	118

Based on the following size of place and distance categories: a large city of over 500,000 people; a suburb of a large city of over 500,000 people; a medium-sized city of 50,000 to 500,000 people; a smaller city, village or countryside location within 15 miles of a larger city; a smaller city, village or countryside location between 15 and 30 miles of a large city; and a smaller city, village or countryside location more than 30 miles from a large city.

*Controlled on size of place or distance from a large city of place of origin.

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